**Corinne Schneider**
06/21/2004 04:18 PM

To: Susan Price/HE/CLB@CLB
cc:
Subject: We have to find a way to do this here!!!!

----- Forwarded by Corinne Schneider/HE/CLB on 06/21/2004 04:18 PM -----

**Paul Freese <pfreese@publiccounsel.org>**
06/21/2004 10:25 AM

To:
cc:
Subject: We have to find a way to do this here!!!!

Sunday, June 13, 2004
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Success in the City of Brotherly Love
The city that knows how - Philly Philadelphia
Effort stems tide of homelessness -- can S.F. learn from it?

Kevin Fagan, Chronicle Staff Writer <mailto:kfagan@sfchronicle.com>
Philadelphia -- Like San Francisco, Philadelphia has a Market Street leading to City Hall with wide traffic lanes, brick sidewalks and a robust business district - - in fact, when surveyor Jasper O'Farrell designed San Francisco's main drag in 1847, he patterned it after Philly's. Both streets have lots of shopping, and they draw crowds of strollers and tourists.
But there's one big difference that O'Farrell probably never counted on. In San Francisco, those strollers and tourists step over, around and alongside thousands of homeless people panhandling, shooting dope, pushing shopping carts or sleeping on the cement. In Philadelphia, you have to look long and hard to find a single panhandler, or homeless person of any kind, anywhere along Market Street.
Or in its downtown, for that matter. Or in its famous Independence National Historical Park, where the Liberty Bell sits among other icons of the foundations of American history.
That's because the City of Brotherly Love, perhaps more than any other in the United States, has solved its problem with chronic homelessness. In stark contrast, that other city known for love -- the Summer of Love -- has the most visible crisis of chronic homelessness in the nation.
"A few years ago, it didn't look anything like this," said Josette Adams, 36, as she pushed her toddler son in a stroller along Philadelphia's Market Street.
"You'd be walking like this, and people were sleeping everywhere, doing their business in the street, panhandling, yelling at you, getting in your face." She paused under the balmy sun, smiling slightly as she looked at the slowly moving mass of tourists and shoppers all around.
"Now?" she said. "I can come down, get a nice lunch, walk around with my son. You can have a nice day."
The secret to this success is not that the homeless were carted off to other cities in police vans. Or thrown in jail. Or so denied welfare or housing that they had to leave town. They weren't.
Philadelphia simply figured out how to truly help its chronically homeless people -- how to give them more than just a blanket and a sandwich and an emergency cot. It got them into permanent housing with counseling services to help them handle their personal demons, particularly mental illness; it got them into drug rehabilitation; it got them into decent, clean shelters that are open 24 hours a day and have teams of doctors and social workers in offices a few feet away.
And, most important of all, the city sent squads of outreach workers into

respect, you feel respect."
That philosophy started everything that changed the face of Philadelphia in 1997 when City Council President -- now Mayor -- John Street proposed a rigid anti-loitering law aimed at clearing the streets of panhandlers. In the mid-1990s, city officials estimated that 4,500 homeless people lived in the city, and half of those were on the street at any given time; the downtown was considered overrun and inhospitable to tourists.
By then, Scullion already had become a street hero because of her campaign in the mid-1980s to take mentally ill "shopping-bag ladies" off the sidewalks and house them, and because she founded Project HOME despite neighborhood opposition. She packed City Council hearings with supporters to plead for a more sensitive approach than pure police action -- and she won.
What resulted was a law making loitering a civil offense, not criminal, and mandating that police first call one of Scullion's outreach workers when they encountered a homeless person blocking the sidewalk. The city earmarked nearly $6 million for new services to help the down-and-out, giving the outreach teams more housing and counseling to offer on the spot.
The result? Street counselors responded within 20 minutes to every call. The homeless started moving into improved shelters and other housing that provided counseling services. And the streets started to clear.
By 1998, there were 850 chronically homeless people on the streets.
Today there are 130.
The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corp. reported last month that since homelessness efforts began in 1997, overnight visits by tourists have jumped 40 percent -- while the same figure nationwide rose just 8.8 percent. Part of that is due to a big push by the city to promote tourism and the addition of two dozen hotels and more than 100 restaurants in the central city -- but the virtual elimination of panhandlers and shopping carts heaped with their belongings made a key difference.
"Ten years ago this was a sort of hellhole without any tourists," Dr. Marcella Maguire, director of the city's chronic homelessness initiatives, said of Center City, the main shopping and financial district, which sits apart from the historic district that houses Independence Hall. "We had abandoned buildings, few restaurants, people didn't want to come. Not attractive.
"Now -- it's night and day."
Today, the city puts 20 outreach workers on the street day and night, ranging from general social workers to police officers assigned to outreach and mental health specialists. And Hess, the city's homelessness "czar," makes a priority of pounding home the concept, day in and day out, that the homeless must be engaged and immediately brought into shelters or housing with counseling services upon demand.
"For anyone to say 'I can't help this guy on the street' is not acceptable, whether it's our cops or our outreach workers," said Hess, who is regularly tapped by homeless officials in cities across the country -- including San Francisco -- for advice. "I've waked the managing director (Philadelphia's city manager) up before to get him to open up a service so we can bring someone inside right away. You need the field guys to know that they are empowered to call us, me, anyone, at any time.
"You do this long enough, hard enough, and you get a paradigm shift," he said. "We're still a work in progress, but I think we reached that shift."
So does San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, who dispatched a team of homeless advisers last winter to check out Philadelphia's system. They took particular note of the outreach system and incorporated the same philosophy into the 10-person Homeless Outreach Team begun in May to try to persuade chronically homeless people to move into shelters, housing or counseling programs.
"What Philadelphia tells me is that there is no excuse not to take care of this problem," Newsom said on a recent stroll through U.N. Plaza, past lines and groups of homeless people sleeping, carousing and furtively smoking crack beneath blankets. "It tells me that it is possible to make a

the past couple of years. One recent morning, Santiago patrolled most of downtown, the railroad tracks along Schuylkill River and the popular Logan Square circular park before he got his first nibble.

"Hey, what's with this New Keys (supportive housing) program I've been hearing about?" growled John Dilliplane, striding up with a Hefty bag of clothes in one hand and a scowl beneath his gray mustache. "Don't give me no crap about shelters, because I hate 'em."

Santiago stopped and regarded the 46-year-old man with a slight smile. "You serious?" he said. "I mean, don't pull my chain -- you serious?"

"Yeah, sure, I guess, maybe," said Dilliplane.

"New Keys is for people who've tried programs before, have plenty of problems, but are willing to give a bed another try," Santiago said. "You in?"

"Sure, but I gotta go there myself," Dilliplane said. "I don't like company."

"Fine," responded Santiago, writing on a business card. "Walk to this address right now, a few blocks away, and they'll talk to you right now. And you have any trouble, here's my phone number, and I'll be back out here tomorrow."

As Dilliplane walked away, Santiago shook his head. "This one might stick, " he said under his breath.

"Sometimes it will take months, or even years, before someone is ready to go inside after you've been talking to them day after day, but that's OK if that's what it takes," he said later. "You force them in too early and, boom, they'll be back on the streets before you know it.

"But you've got to make sure of one thing: If you offer them something, you'd better be able to deliver, right then and for real, or it doesn't mean s -- ," he added. "You can't B.S. these people. They can smell a con a mile away. "

At 47, Patty Baltimore had heard an earful of what she considered false promises and failed opportunities before she was finally ready to listen. She bounced from shelter to street to rehab to mental health services in the city until Maguire finally hooked her up with a full-time case worker this past year -- and now, after she'd all but given up on getting lasting help, Baltimore has her own apartment for the first time in seven years.

"You could illuminate this city and see my tears all over it," Baltimore said a few weeks ago as she moved into her east-side Philadelphia digs, a one- bedroom Victorian unit with white kitchen cabinets she had scrubbed so hard they sparkled. "The only thing that was missing was that I needed to learn how to trust." She teared up and pointed to Maguire and the other two social workers who helped her move in.

"Y'all are angels," she said. "It just took me awhile to see it."

Coming Monday: What San Francisco can learn from a New York homeless program.